

REPRESENTATIVE HENRY A. WAXMAN'S SUGGESTIONS ON LEARNING MORE ABOUT NURSING HOME CONDITIONS

After reading my report on nursing home conditions in Los Angeles County, you may be interested in learning more about the conditions in a specific home. Whether you're a current or prospective nursing home resident, or a family member or friend of a nursing home resident, it's important to learn as much as possible about a nursing home. There are several simple ways to do this.

First, visit the website of the Health Care Financing Administration (HCFA)

(<http://www.medicare.gov/NHCompare/Home.asp>) -- This federal agency, which administers both the Medicare and Medicaid programs, provides information on all 17,000 nursing homes in the United States. Using this website, you can search for any nursing home in the country -- by zip code or state. For each home, you can find information on:

- C All violations cited in the nursing home's most recent state inspection
- C A comparison between the number of violations at the home and the average number of violations at other homes in the same state
- C The number of beds and residents in the home
- C Whether the home accepts Medicare and/or Medicaid
- C Whether the home is run by a for-profit corporation, non-profit corporation, religious organization, or government entity
- C Characteristics about the residents in the home (*e.g.*, the number of incontinent residents, the number of residents in restraints)

If you don't have access to the Internet or aren't comfortable using the Internet, you can obtain this same information by calling HCFA at 1-800-MEDICARE (1-800-633-4227).

If you need information about selecting or paying for a nursing home, HCFA's website also has a useful pamphlet titled "Your Guide to Choosing a Nursing Home."

Second, visit the nursing homes in which you are interested -- There's no substitute for actually visiting a facility, talking to residents and staff members, examining the cleanliness of the facility, and observing the interaction between residents and staff.

Third, read the state inspection reports -- Every nursing home in the United States is inspected on average once a year. The findings of the state inspectors are contained in a detailed report, which lists all violations of government standards. You can obtain copies of these reports from two places:

- C You can contact the nursing home in which you are interested. By law, all nursing homes are required to post the inspection reports in a prominent place.
- C You can contact the Los Angeles district office of the California Department of Health Services (800-228-1019). This office keeps the inspection reports for all 440 nursing homes in Los Angeles County. You should also contact this office if you have concerns that a nursing home may be violating government standards.

Other Sources of Information

If you still need more information about a specific home or about paying for nursing home care, there are several other good sources of information.

- C **Call or visit the website of the California Advocates for Nursing Home Reform (CANHR)** (415-474-5171) (<http://www.canhr.org>) -- On this group's website, you can find information on:
 - C The violations, complaints, and citations for all 1,400 nursing homes in California
 - C The rights of all nursing home residents
 - C How California's Medi-Cal program operates

If you need to find a lawyer, CANHR also operates a referral service to assist nursing home residents and their families in finding lawyers to litigate cases of abuse or neglect, or to provide estate planning services.

- C **Call the California nursing home ombudsman** (800-231-4024) -- In California, as in all other states, there is an ombudsman who can answer questions about nursing homes or assist in resolving disputes between nursing homes and residents or family members.
- C **Call or visit the website of the California Department of Health Services (DHS)** (916-445-2070) (<http://www.dhs.cahwnet.gov/lnc/index.htm>) -- This state agency is in charge of the licensing and certification of all nursing homes in California, including the annual inspections that are conducted of each home. On its website, you can find information on:
 - C The rights of nursing home residents, including the right to be free from abuse
 - C How to choose a nursing home
 - C Phone numbers in order to obtain assistance
- C **Call Bet Tzedek Legal Services (323-939-0506)** -- Bet Tzedek is a nonprofit, public interest law center which provides free legal services to low-income residents of Los

Angeles County. Bet Tzedek offers a booklet called “Nursing Home Companion: A User-Friendly Guide to Nursing Homes Laws and Practices.”

- C **Call or visit the website of the National Citizens’ Coalition for Nursing Home Reform (202-332-2275) (<http://www.nccnhr.org>)** -- This national organization offers many publications and factsheets on the rights of nursing home residents and how family members can ensure that residents receive quality care.